

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 08SANJOSE868, COSTA RICA APPRECIATIVE OF MERIDA PLAN, DESPITE

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08SANJOSE868**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08SANJOSE868</a>	<a href="#">2008-11-03 23:02</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy San Jose</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasDestacadas/Investigacion2702320.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702325.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotaPrincipal/Investigacion2702324.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702326.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702327.aspx>

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSJ #0868/01 3082302  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 032302Z NOV 08  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0240  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUMIAGH/COMJTF-B SIMS SOTO CANO HO PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/DIRJIATF SOUTH PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEABND/DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMIN HQ WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 000868

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC AND INL/LP;

PANAMA ALSO FOR LEGATT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2018

TAGS: [CS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#)

SUBJECT: COSTA RICA APPRECIATIVE OF MERIDA PLAN, DESPITE  
PRESIDENT'S COMPLAINTS

REF: A. SAN JOSE 389

[B](#). SAN JOSE 586

[C](#). SAN JOSE 596

Classified By: DCM Peter M. Brennan for reason 1.4(d).

[1](#). (SBU) SUMMARY: In our detailed briefings since October 1, senior members of the GOCR in all three branches of government, plus some opposition legislators, have reacted positively and appreciatively to the Merida Initiative. This positive private reaction has contrasted sharply to President Arias' repeated public complaints about the paucity of USG assistance, including Merida (septel). However, most of our interlocutors politely suggested that far more assistance is needed to deal with the deteriorating domestic security environment here. As in other prospective Merida recipient countries, they also wanted to know when the assistance would actually start flowing. Our briefees included, among others, former Vice-President/Minister of Justice Laura Chinchilla; Minister of Public Security Janina Del Vecchio; President of the Supreme Court Luis Paulino Mora; and key members of the national legislature from the committees most interested in Merida issues. END SUMMARY.

=====  
MERIDA BRIEFINGS WELL RECEIVED . . .  
=====

[2](#). (U) While waiting for the Merida funding details to be hammered out in Washington, we used the month of October to brief all three branches of government. From the executive branch, we briefed the Ministry of the Presidency, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Justice, the Costa Rican Drug Institute (ICD, roughly equivalent to the U.S. ONDCP), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the judicial branch, we briefed the President of the Supreme Court and the Director of the Judicial Police. From the national parliament, our audience was four members from the key counternarcotics and domestic security committees.

[3](#). (SBU) All were grateful for the assistance that Merida would bring, but emphasized that much more was needed to truly put domestic security on the right path in Costa Rica. None complained about the 15 percent reporting requirement related to human rights issues. We made a point of assembling an inter-agency team (State, DoD or USCG and DEA) to conduct these briefings, to underscore Merida's holistic approach.

[4](#). (SBU) Due to the decentralized manner in which Costa Rica approaches law enforcement issues, we will have to sign Letters of Agreement (LOA) with four separate ministries to implement Merida. The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) will receive the lion's share of funding, and will sign the biggest LOA, covering four of the seven specific programs for Costa Rica from FY 2008-appropriated Merida funds: Regional Maritime Interdiction, Improved Policing/Police Equipment, Improved Border Inspection, and OAS Stockpile Management and Destruction. The other three LOAs will be signed with the Supreme Court, the Ministry of the Presidency/ICD, and the Ministry of Justice (see details below).

=====  
BY THE MINISTRIES . . .  
=====

[5](#). (SBU) Minister Del Vecchio appreciated the briefing and instructed her operational commanders to work with us to develop the best spending plans possible, particularly with the police assistance funds. We plan to concentrate that funding on improving police communications, purchasing vehicles with off-road capabilities, police

professionalization training, and improvement of the K-9 units. The spending plans for maritime activities are well known and covered in Refs and the Merida documents.

¶16. (SBU) The Ministry of the Presidency, via the ICD, will direct the Center for Drug Crime Intelligence (CDI). VM for Security Issues Jose Torres told us he had received a regional-level briefing on the Merida Initiative in Honduras recently and thanked us for our focus on the bilateral aspects of the plan. Torres believed the plan was "just what

Costa Rica needed," though he agreed that more assistance was necessary. ICD will manage the CDI in coordination with the two other major entities that will be connected to the Center, the Drug Control Police (PCD) and the Narcotics Section of the Judicial Police (OIJ).

¶17. (SBU) Although not directly involved in Merida, we briefed Alex Solano, Deputy Director for Foreign Policy, and relevant senior MFA officials. They also welcomed the briefing, in particular because the other GOCR agencies involved had not shared Merida details. We stressed to Solano and his team that President Arias' continued public criticism of Merida would not work in Costa Rica's favor. Our interlocutors "got it," and Solano in particular appreciated that Costa Rica only had limited absorptive capacity to use security assistance productively.

¶18. (SBU) We also explained the 15 percent reporting requirement, which was of particular interest to FM Bruno Stagno (who had earlier asked the Ambassador for details). Addressing Stagno's specific concerns, we highlighted that Mexico did not have lighter requirements than the Central American countries, and noted that Costa Rica, because of its well-known record on human rights, should be able to meet the 15 percent requirement easily.

¶19. (SBU) We briefed then-Minister of Justice (and then-Vice President) Chinchilla on the Merida initiative because prison management falls under the MOJ. Speaking of CAFE, Chinchilla stressed that Costa Rica's fingerprint network needed to be digitized to interconnect various domestic security services, including OIJ, Fuerza Publica (the regular cops), and the penitentiary system. VM Fernando Ferraro explained that the GOCR did not even have accurate fingerprints (and therefore accurate identities) of many of the prisoners in the national penal system. He hoped that CAFE might help address this problem.

¶10. (U) NOTE: Chinchilla has since resigned from both jobs as Minister of Justice and Vice-President to pursue her party's nomination for President in 2010. We plan to brief the new Minister of Justice, Viviana Martin, soon. END NOTE.

=====  
BY THE JUDICIARY. . .  
=====

¶11. (SBU) The Supreme Court, via the Judicial Police (OIJ; a rough equivalent to the FBI), will be responsible for the integration of the Central American Fingerprint Exchange (CAFE) system. Supreme Court President Mora appreciated the brief and instructed the Director of OIJ, Jorge Rojas, to take the lead for the GOCR on CAFE. Along with our FBI regional attache in Panama, we will coordinate with OIJ to get Costa Rica on board.

=====  
AND BY THE LEGISLATURE . . .  
=====

¶12. (SBU) In a wide-ranging briefing on law enforcement and counternarcotics issues, legislators Federico Tinoco (PLN, Chairman of the Counternarcotics Committee), Luis Antonio Barrantes (ML, Chairman of the Domestic Security Committee); Marvin Rojas (PAC, ex-Chairman of the CN Committee); and Olivier Perez (PAC, member of the Domestic Security Committee) appreciated our transparency on Merida. Perez, a

judge by background, agreed that the 15 percent reporting requirement was a reasonable mechanism to ensure compliance with human rights protections in the region. Although from opposing parties, all four legislators agreed that law enforcement and security issues should generate multi-party cooperation, instead of partisan bickering.

=====  
BUT, SHOW US THE MONEY!  
=====

¶13. (SBU) While we anticipated questions on Merida's 15 percent "reporting requirements," all interlocutors were far more concerned to put the plan into effect as soon as

possible. All entities that would sign LOAs were anxious to get the process moving and asked us when we could expect to receive funding. We explained that the process was on-going and that we expected to receive draft LOAs soon from the INL-funded programs. Similar letters from DoD, covering the re-started FMF program in Costa Rica (which will fund equipment for the coast guard), may take longer to generate and complete. (NOTE: On October 31 the Costa Rican Chief of Police, Erick Lacayo, politely asked us again when the Merida funding would begin. Lacayo, who will be joined by VM Marcela Chacon and Coast Guard Director Martin Arias, will travel to El Salvador on November 6-7 for the SICA/Merida meeting. We expect the Costa Rica delegation to push for speedy delivery of Merida funding as well as inquire about future funding amounts for FY2009 and FY2010 from Merida. END NOTE.)

=====  
COMMENT  
=====

¶14. (C) We have quietly but firmly pushed back against President Oscar Arias' continued complaints that Merida is "stingy". His sentiments have not been strongly endorsed nor loudly echoed by the ministers and their teams who will make Merida a reality here. Many acknowledge that the President is following his own course, and not taking others' council these days. However, GOCR security officials know they need help, and for them, more help is always better, and USG help is preferred. The best way to demonstrate our talking point that "Merida FY08 is only a down payment," to provide the tools Costa Rica needs to help itself, and to counter Arias' complaints, is to start delivering the assistance as promised. CIANCHETTE